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WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An isolated nucleic acid molecule which encodes GB virus-B, said molecule capable of expressing said virus when transfected into cells.

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2. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 1, wherein said molecule encodes the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:2.

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3. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 2, wherein said molecule comprises the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1.

4. A DNA construct comprising a nucleic acid molecule according to claim 1.

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5. A DNA construct comprising a nucleic acid molecule according to claim 3.

6. An RNA transcript of the DNA construct of claims 4 or 5.

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7. A cell transfected with the DNA construct of claims 4 or 5.

8. A cell transfected with RNA transcripts of claim 6.

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9. A GB virus-B polypeptide produced by the cell of claim 7.

10. A GB virus-B polypeptide produced by the cell of claim 8.

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11. A GB virus-B produced by the cell of claim 7.

12. A GB virus-B produced by the cell of claim 8.

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13. A GB virus-B whose genome comprises a nucleic acid molecule according to claim 1.

14. A GB virus-B whose genome comprises a nucleic acid molecule according to claim 3.

15. A method for producing a GB virus-B comprising transfecting a host cell with the DNA construct of claims 4 or 5.

16. A method for producing a GB virus-B comprising transfecting a host cell with the RNA transcript of claim 6.

17. A composition comprising a nucleic acid molecule of claim 1 suspended in a suitable amount of a pharmaceutically acceptable diluent or excipient.

18. A composition comprising a nucleic acid molecule of claim 3 suspended in a suitable amount of a pharmaceutically acceptable diluent or excipient.

19. A nucleic acid molecule comprising a chimeric virus genome, said genome being a GB virus-B genome according to claim 1 in which a 3' or 5' UTR sequence of the genome is replaced by a corresponding region of the 3' or 5' UTR sequence of a hepatitis C virus genome.

20. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 19, wherein a 3' UTR sequence of the genome of a GB virus-B is replaced by a corresponding 3' UTR sequence of a hepatitis C virus genome.

21. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 20, wherein the 3' UTR sequence is the 3' UTR terminal stem loop sequence.

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22. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 19, wherein a 5' UTR sequence of the genome of a GB virus-B has been replaced by a corresponding 5' UTR sequence of a hepatitis C virus genome.

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23. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 22, wherein the 5' UTR sequence is the IRES sequence.

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24. A nucleic acid molecule comprising a chimeric virus genome, said genome being a GB virus-B genome according to claim 1 in which the non-structural region of the genome of a GB virus-B has been replaced by the non-structural region of a hepatitis C virus genome.

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25. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 24, wherein at least one gene from the non-structural region of the genome of a GB virus-B has been replaced by the corresponding gene from the non-structural region of a hepatitis C virus genome.

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26. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 25, wherein the gene from the non-structural region is selected from the group consisting of NS3 protease, NS3 RNA helicase, or NS5B RNA polymerase.

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27. A nucleic acid molecule comprising a chimeric virus genome, said genome being a GB virus-B genome according to claim 1 in which the structural region of the genome of a GB virus-B has been replaced by the structural region of a hepatitis C virus genome.

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28. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 27, wherein at least one gene from the structural region of the genome of a GB virus-B has been replaced by the

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corresponding gene from the structural region of a hepatitis C virus genome.

29. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 28, wherein the gene from the structural region is selected  
5 from the group consisting of E1, E2 or C.

30. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 28, wherein the E1 and E2 genes from the structural region of the genome of a GB virus-B have been replaced by the  
10 E1 and E2 genes of a hepatitis C virus genome.

31. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 28, wherein the E1 gene from the structural region of the genome of a GB virus-B has been replaced by the E1 gene  
15 of a hepatitis C virus genome.

32. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 28, wherein the E2 gene from the structural regions of the genome of a GB virus-B has been replaced by the E2 gene  
20 of a hepatitis C virus genome.

33. A DNA construct comprising the nucleic acid molecule of claims 19, 24 or 27.

34. An RNA transcript of the DNA construct of  
25 claim 33.

35. A virus whose genome comprises a nucleic acid molecule according to claims 19, 24 or 27.

36. A nucleic acid molecule comprising a  
30 chimeric virus genome, said genome being a hepatitis C virus genome in which a 3' or 5' UTR sequence of the genome is replaced by a corresponding region of the 3' or 5' UTR sequence of a GB virus-B genome according to  
35 claim 1.

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37. A nucleic acid molecule comprising a chimeric virus genome, said genome being a hepatitis C virus genome in which the non-structural region of the genome has been replaced by the non-structural region of a GB virus-B genome according to claim 1.

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38. A nucleic acid molecule comprising a chimeric virus genome, said genome being a hepatitis C virus genome in which the structural region of the genome has been replaced by the structural region of a GB virus-B genome according to claim 1.

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39. A polypeptide encoded by the nucleic acid molecule of claims 19, 24 or 27.

40. A polypeptide encoded by the nucleic acid molecule of claims 36, 37 or 38.

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